

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia: Mr. Speaker, the PHONE Act is a strong bill that has gained bipartisan support. Members on both sides of the aisle have agreed that we need urgent reforms to protect privacy rights and to crack down on identity theft. With over 10 million Americans affected by some form of identity theft each year, we need to tackle this issue at every possible level.

Spoofing is one form of identity theft in which criminals coax victims into giving up their most sensitive personal information by making it appear that a call is coming from a legitimate institution such as a bank. Misleading caller ID information also allows a spoofer to cause a victim to accept a call they otherwise might have avoided, leading to harassment and further privacy intrusions. Advances in technology such as Voice-Over-Internet-Protocol have made caller ID spoofing easy and readily available.

H.R. 740 includes a number of important provisions to fight spoofing. The legislation creates a new Federal crime to prohibit using or providing false caller ID information with the intent to wrongfully obtain something of value. The section also prohibits using or providing the caller ID for information of an actual person without his or her consent and with the intent to deceive the recipient. It correctly targets spoofing done to perpetuate financial fraud, and reserves harsh punishment for such crimes, including felony penalties of up to 5 years in prison.

In addition, the bill significantly improves the tools available to law enforcement to fight noncommercial spoofing while preserving the legitimate uses of the technology. For example, women's shelters

may use misleading caller ID numbers, and many businesses do if they are calling from one of many lines. They may want the caller ID information to just reflect the main line. The bill does not infringe on these instances because the caller would not possess the requisite intent to defraud or deceive.

Finally, the bill is narrowly tailored to permit caller ID blocking in which one prevents one's number from being known at all. Caller ID blocking is not used to mislead because a person knows he is not getting any number and it has been a standard telephone device for many years.

In sum, the PHONE Act will deter telephone fraud, protect consumers from harassment, and will enhance protection of sensitive personal information.

Mr. Speaker, let me conclude by saying this started as bipartisan legislation and has continued. The information was brought to us when the chief Republican counsel on the committee, Phil Kiko, received such harassment because his number had been used by somebody else making annoying calls. He got called back because his number was appearing as the caller ID.

Mr. *Murphy* introduced the bill last year and we have worked to improve the bill and have made significant improvements since last year. Chairman *Conyers*, Ranking Member *Smith*, and Ranking Member *Forbes*

, we all worked very closely together to make sure that we could have the best product possible. I urge my colleagues to join together and pass the legislation.